

Fracking articles in news-fyi

Chris Zawlocki to: Cynthia Caporale, Cynthia Metzger



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From: Chris Zawlocki/DC/USEPA/US

To: Cynthia Caporale/ESC/R3/USEPA/US@EPA, Cynthia Metzger/ESC/R3/USEPA/US@EPA

Happy New Year! Hope you enjoyed your holidays with family and friends. I am glad the
nonresponsive

Passing along as fyi-- not sure if you get these or not or even have time to read them. Let me know if u don't want me to send to u and clog up your email box.

News Headline: Encana asks EPA to suspend fracking comment period |  

Outlet Full Name: San Antonio Express-News - Online

News Text: CHEYENNE, Wyo. (AP) — The owner of a central Wyoming gas field where federal regulators suggested a link between a drilling technique and groundwater pollution asked the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on Monday to suspend public comment on the draft report.

Gov. Matt Mead, meanwhile, was back in Cheyenne on Monday after making a secret trip to Pavillion last week to talk to locals about their well water.

Encana officials say the EPA hasn't been sufficiently clear about which specific questions and topics the comments from the public, the company and government agencies are supposed to cover.

The company also is seeking more of the data that went into preparing the document and has filed a Freedom of Information Act request to get it.

"For us to be able to comment on the draft study to the extent that we want to and feel is appropriate, we need to have the full information and data that we requested. We feel that is very important to us to get a full response," Encana spokesman Doug Hock said.

EPA officials said they were reviewing the letter.

A group representing landowners in the Pavillion area objected to Encana's push to suspend the public comment period amid the company's efforts to fault publicly much of EPA's methodology and draft findings.

"They've beat the drum, they've put out all these comments, they've torn the investigation apart. They've made all the comments that they can make. And now that they've made their comments they want to take away the ability for the citizens to make their comments on this investigation," said John Fenton with the Powder River Basin Resource Council and the group Pavillion Area Concerned Citizens.

The public comment period began Dec. 14 and is scheduled to continue through Jan. 27. The company told the EPA's Office of Research and Development in a letter Friday it wanted the public comment period suspended until the agency could specify its request for

public comments and provide the additional data.

Encana officials say the EPA hasn't been sufficiently clear about which specific questions and topics the comments from the public, the company and government agencies are supposed to cover. The company also is seeking more of the data that went into preparing the document and has filed a Freedom of Information Act request to get it.

At issue is whether hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, contaminated groundwater in the Pavillion gas field in Fremont County.

Fracking involves pumping pressurized water, sand and chemicals into oil and gas wells to fracture rock.

The draft EPA report released Dec. 8 theorized fracking might have been responsible for certain chemicals found in two monitoring wells the EPA drilled to test for pollution in the Pavillion groundwater.

Encana officials would like for the EPA to halt the public comment period on the draft report, respond to the company's concerns, then reopen the comment period, said Hock, the company spokesman.


Pavillion area residents have complained for years that their well water began stinking of chemicals around the time Encana stepped up fracking in their area. The EPA began investigating the problem after what locals have described as an at best tepid response to their concerns on the part of state officials.

Fenton said Mead toured the Pavillion area with locals Thursday on the condition that the news media not be notified in advance.

"We explained to him that he has a very historical opportunity here to stand up for the people of Wyoming, especially the impacted people of Wyoming who are paying the ultimate price for oil and gas being extracted out from under their property," Fenton said.

The only event listed on Mead's public schedule last week was an appearance at the Gillette Rotary Club on Thursday. Mead spokesman Renny MacKay confirmed the governor also was in Pavillion that day.

"Governor Mead wanted to see the area for himself and visit the impacted landowners in person. He felt this was beneficial and he appreciated the time of the citizens who met with him. Not everyone can come to the Capitol for a meeting and Governor Mead meets with a lot of citizens and does not consider them public events," MacKay said by email.

News Headline: Pennsylvania Fracking Foes Fault EPA Over Tainted Water Response | 



Outlet Full Name: Bloomberg BusinessWeek - Online

News Text: Jan. 10 (Bloomberg) -- When the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency called

to say it would start delivering fresh water to their home, Ron and Jean Carter thought they gained an ally in a long fight with Cabot Oil & Gas Corp.

A retreat by the federal government within two days has left them feeling abandoned yet again in a bid to clean up water they say was turned toxic by Cabot's use of hydraulic fracturing to hunt for gas in Pennsylvania.

"These agencies were developed to help us, and they don't," Jean Carter said in an interview in her home, which is about 326 feet (99 meters) from a Cabot well. Although her reserves of water are sufficient for now, she took it as a snub. "We just keep getting hurt all the way around, as if we weren't hurt enough."

The Carters and other families in Dimock -- a community of 1,368 and a single, blinking traffic light along Highway 29 in northeast Pennsylvania -- have come to symbolize the national debate over the use of fracking, in which water and chemicals are shot into the earth to free gas or oil from rock formations. Their case has taken on a new importance as the EPA says it will test well water in the area, and advised residents not to drink from their wells -- reversing an earlier, initial determination that the water was safe.

Dimock residents say their water went bad more than three years ago. Since then more questions have been raised about the safety of fracking.

Moratorium Urged

In December the EPA linked fracking to groundwater contamination in Wyoming. In September, Pennsylvania's environment department cited Cabot for leaking methane into groundwater in Lenox, 15 miles east of Dimock. Yesterday a group of doctors called for a moratorium on fracking in populated areas until the health effects are better understood.

Any crackdown on natural-gas drilling would be trouble for companies and the fast-growing industry. Cabot was the best performer last year in the Standard & Poor's 500 Index. Natural gas prices dropped 32 percent in 2011, driven primarily by the rise in recoveries from shale formations, according to the U.S. Energy Department. Fracking accounts for a third of the U.S. gas supply, up from 14 percent in 2009, it said.

And counties across Pennsylvania and Ohio are booming as a result. Dimock is in Susquehanna County, which had a 7 percent unemployment rate in November, according to the Department of Labor, compared with the nationwide rate of 8.7 percent. The county planning commission said in its last annual report that managing the drive for gas will be a top challenge.

Economic Boost

Drilling in Pennsylvania's portion of the Marcellus Shale formation could mean \$20 billion to the state's economy by 2020, from \$13 billion last year, according to an industry-funded study published by researchers from Pennsylvania State University in State College.

For some residents, that development comes at a cost.

Norma Fiorentino, 68, who lives less than a mile from the Carters, said her water well

exploded on Jan. 1, 2009, cracking the concrete top.

"I will never drink my water again," she said. "Never, ever, ever."

Julie and Craig Sautner, who live on the same dirt road as the Carters, keep milky samples of water on a shelf to show off its poor quality. They were shocked to get the notification from the EPA that the water was safe. EPA's local community involvement officer Trish Taylor wrote residents saying there was no sign "the well water presents an immediate health threat to users." A copy of the letter was provided to Bloomberg News.

Don't Drink Water

After the EPA got the results from Cabot's own analysis of local wells from September, agency officials made a return visit to area homes on the last days of 2011. This time their message was different, according to residents: Don't drink the water.

On Jan. 6 Taylor called Carter to ask if she needed a water delivery. She didn't. The Sierra Club had provided bottled water. Still, she and other residents took the offer as a sign of support from federal government. Within two days the pledge was rescinded.

"We're left scratching for water now," Julia Sautner, who is part of a federal lawsuit with Carter against Cabot, said in an interview.

Taylor didn't return a telephone message seeking comment on the exchange with residents. The national EPA hasn't decided whether to provide water, Betsaida Alcantara, an EPA spokeswoman in Washington, said in an e-mail.

Water, \$4.1 Million

Officials from Houston-based Cabot say they have done all they can to help residents. Although the company didn't admit responsibility for the methane in the water, it agreed to provide families with fresh water, install water filters and pay each affected family twice the value of their home. Of the \$4.1 million the company put aside to pay out claims in Dimock, \$1.9 million has been claimed, according to the company.

"Our sampling and data indicate the water is safe," George Stark, a company spokesman, said in an interview. "Cabot, in negotiations with the state, settled this in a way that was beneficial to all."

In November, the company stopped providing residents water, unless they agreed to sign on to the settlement and get the filters installed. The Carters say the cleaning systems offered by Cabot won't remove what they say are chemicals that have infiltrated their water wells.

For the administration of President Barack Obama, the fight in Pennsylvania represents a test for how it will deal with fracking issues. The EPA has already started regulatory efforts to force disclosure of chemicals used in the process, regulate air pollution from drilling and set standards for wastewater treatment.

Study By 2014

The agency is also conducting an extensive study of the effect on drinking water, with plans to release the final study in 2014.

Meanwhile, even those first steps have put the U.S. on the "wrong track," threatening to stifle development of the key natural resource, Jack Gerard, the president of the American Petroleum Institute in Washington, said Jan. 4.

While Julie Sautner, 49, said she's disappointed the EPA didn't follow through with the water delivery, she's hopeful the Washington will intervene on their behalf.

"We want to go back and live the way people are supposed to," she said.

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